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THE "TRAJAN-RELIEFS" IN THE ROMAN FORUM

SELDOM do excavations on a well-known Roman site bring to light any of its ancient art treasures; still less often is a monument of historical interest found, whose existence no extant literature records. Most ruins when laid bare are best described by the Renaissance epigram, "Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini." The discovery, therefore, in the Forum, in September, 1872, of two beautiful marble screens or *plutei*, was one of great interest to all students of archaeology. They stand, at present, midway between the Column of Phocas and the remains of the street known as *Ad Janum*. Each screen measures¹ 5.37 m. in length, and 1.75 m. in height; they are 2.95 m. apart, parallel to the front of the Rostra and to each other. Each is composed of several blocks of white marble, carved in relief on either side. These blocks vary greatly in size, the largest ones, however, being always placed at the ends. It appears that the artist took materials already on hand, rather than wait to find single blocks of the requisite size. The joining of the different pieces was doubtless so well done that each *pluteus* appeared to have been cut from a single stone. The inner surfaces of both present the same subject—the three animals offered in the *suovetaurilia* (Fig. 1). The *ovis*, *sus*, and *taurus*, each exceptionally well fed and sleek, are adorned

¹ The measurements are given in detail, both because essential in later discussions, and because frequently incorrectly stated. In the description which follows it is to be noted that upon the foundations of rough travertine, upon which the parts still *in situ* were found, blocks of modern marble have been placed in order that the whole might be solidly reset; these latter are not considered in the description.

with the sacrificial fillets, and the first and last named have, in addition, broad girdles, fringed on the ends and embroidered throughout their entire length. Above this design comes the cornice, which runs along both sides and across the ends of the screen. It has first a foliated cyma, then the corona decorated with a double maeander, below which is an egg and dart moulding, a foliated *cyma reversa*, and a pearl astragal. The whole effect is of luxuriant decoration, each member having some form of ornamentation.

The scenes on the outside of the *plutei* are cut in higher relief than the inner ones, and have suffered much more from

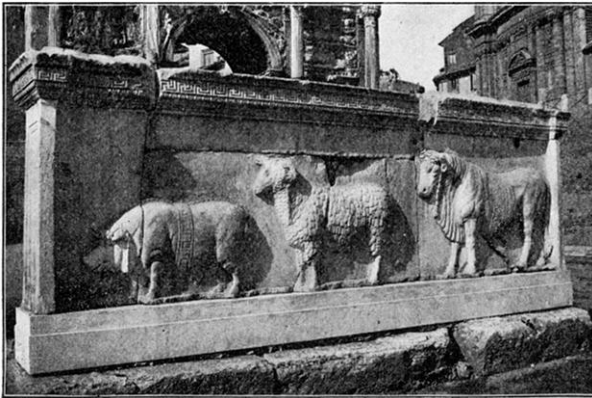


FIGURE 1.—THE SUOVETAURILIA.

the lapse of time or wilful mutilation. On the western screen (Fig. 2) we see in profile a platform, with the adornment of a ship's beak upon its front. Upon it stands a man clad in a toga, attended by six men, at least three of whom hold the rods of the lictor. The group upon the ground before the rostra is composed of thirteen men, wearing short, full togas, with their right hands uplifted in sign of applause. This scene occupies a little over half the screen.

Next to it is a square or rectangular *suggestum*, upon which, on a draped seat, sits the emperor, clad in the usual toga; his foot rests upon a footstool. Before him, upon the same plat-

form, stands a woman ; her figure is somewhat obscured in places by mutilations, but there seems to be no doubt that she held on her left arm a child, while with the right hand she led an older one. On the right of this tribunal stand four men dressed in the same fashion as the group before the rostra. Beyond these men is a fig tree, with leaves and fruit, having a cubical base; next to which, on a similar base, is the nude booted figure carrying a wine skin, known as Marsyas.

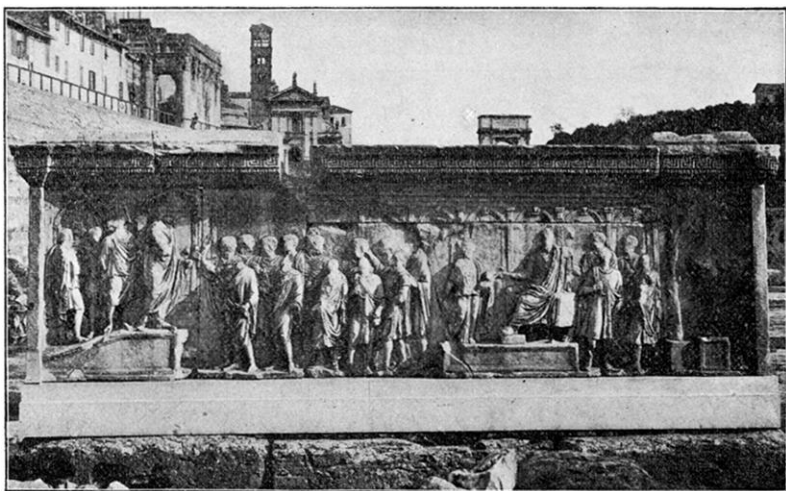


FIGURE 2. — THE TRAJAN-RELIEFS: THE WESTERN SCREEN.

The outside of the eastern screen (Fig. 3) shows, beginning at the left hand, the fig tree and the Marsyas ; then nine men, each of whom carries upon his shoulder some object which is evidently to be deposited upon a pile of similar objects toward which all are walking. Behind, and at the right of the pile, stand two other men likewise bearing burdens, and beyond them are four others, who are, judging by their dress, of higher rank than the rest. Beyond these officials the large end block of the *pluteus* is missing ; we can see only the front of a platform with fragments of a seated figure. The background of

each of these groups on the outside of the *plutei* is composed of buildings of various styles and sizes.

That much interest was at once aroused by these reliefs is easily understood. Aside from the fact that they were previously unknown, and so offered an unusual field for investigation, it was immediately surmised, from the rostra appearing on each of the outer reliefs, that the scenes were in the Forum,



FIGURE 3. — THE TRAJAN-RELIEFS: THE EASTERN SCREEN.

and the buildings forming the background those belonging to this place. The question arose, Will the buildings date themselves, and so give us an idea of the Forum at a definite period, or will the reverse be true?

A full discussion of the screens, therefore, must consider them from the points of view of both the historian and the topographer, and must include a study of their probable use and position.

Historical Interpretation of the Reliefs. — Our knowledge of the buildings and adornments of the Forum under the Repub-

lic makes it most improbable that the screens can belong to that period. Under the Empire, a private citizen would hardly have been distinguished by so unique a monument. The dress, position, and attendants of the main figure in each group, as well as the attitudes of those before him, and the fact that on the eastern screen the figure upon the rostra was evidently seated and clad in a toga, make it seem certain that we have here the commemoration of some notable act on the part of an emperor. Critics have suggested that he was either Domitian, Trajan, or Hadrian, because in the life of each of these there occur certain events which these scenes might be considered to portray. The arguments in favor of each interpretation will, therefore, be reviewed.

Visconti¹ appears as the chief exponent of the view that two scenes from the life of Domitian are here represented. That emperor is known to have promulgated, among other acts, one against *eviratio*,² and one abolishing the *libelli famosi*.³ The promulgation of the first edict might well have taken place from the Rostra, especially as Suetonius says :³ "ius diligenter et industrie dixit, plerumque et in foro pro tribunali, extra ordinem." Moreover, according to Visconti, some of the men in the groups on the western screen wear the *pallium*, but most of them wear the *paenula*, which is particularly the garment of slaves or of those who have no right to the toga. The curious object carried in the hand of one of those in the front rank (similar ones may have been held by others) he takes to be a basket, which would indicate the servile condition of the one by whom it is carried.

The group upon the square tribunal is considered by him to be without doubt a personification of *Fecunditas*, as she appears upon the coins of the younger Faustina⁴ and of Lucilla,⁵ thus

¹ Visconti, *Deux actes de Domitien*.

² Suet. *Dom.* 7 ; Stat. *Silv.* 3, 4, 73-77 ; 4, 3, 13-15 ; Mart. 9, 6.

³ Suet. *Dom.* 8.

⁴ Cohen, *Description historique des Médailles impériales romaines* (1883), III, p. 143, 93-105.

⁵ *Ibid.* III, p. 216, 20-26.

suggesting the beneficent effect of the edict which the whole commemorates.

Turning now to the eastern screen, we are told that this is a representation of the suppression of the *libelli famosi* mentioned by Suetonius.¹ The man upon the rostra is probably the emperor, the one in the toga next to the rostra must be some magistrate, and the one wearing the *cothurni* either a centurion or a tribune charged with the duty of applying the torch. This cremation of condemned articles took place according to Livy² "*in comitio*," which our critic considers to be the same as "*in foro*." A coin of Hadrian,³ commemorating the remission of old dues, represents the emperor in somewhat the same position applying the torch to a mass of papers.

These are the arguments from history which assist Visconti in deciding that it is Domitian whose acts are here commemorated. The reliefs upon the inner surfaces he regards as particularly appropriate, because they would call to mind the fact that the edicts were promulgated by Domitian chiefly in his character as censor, for it was by this official that the solemn sacrifice of the *suovetaurilia* was usually offered.

Taking up the question of date as determined by art, Visconti points out that each member of the moulding has its appropriate decoration, and that the simple, unadorned members found in the days when taste in such matters was purer, are lacking. The height of bad taste in cornices was reached during the reign of Domitian, as may be seen by a comparison of those of the Forum Transitorium with those of the Arch of Titus. Later, Trajan's good taste did much to correct this degeneration, and the Forum of Trajan, the temple of Venus and Rome, and the temple of Antoninus and Faustina show how great was the change from Domitian's time, for they present a style as good as that of the Augustan age.

¹ Dom. 8.

² Livy, 40, 29. It may be noted that Tac. *Agr.* 2, says, "*monumenta clarissimorum ingeniorum in comitio ac foro urerentur.*"

³ Cohen, II, p. 209, 1212.

The cutting of the reliefs, in Visconti's opinion, points to the first century of the Empire; the movements of the figures are easy and natural, the folds of the drapery are in good style, the composition of the whole is simple and uniform, showing but two planes of relief. The high polish so much used in the time of Hadrian is also lacking. In addition to these arguments from history and art, it must be remembered that Domitian's reign was signalized by much rebuilding, particularly in the Forum and upon the Capitol.¹

These facts and inferences leave no doubt in the mind of this critic that the reliefs should be assigned to the reign of Domitian.

Brizio,² who has supported the theory that certain acts of Hadrian are perpetuated upon these *plutei*, argues as follows: "The acts represented belong, without doubt, to one man, who, in this period, can have been none other than the emperor. The enthusiasm with which his words are received indicates that some largess or work of beneficence is being promised. The group on the *suggestum* in the western screen is to be considered as monumental and allegorical, because (a) the *suggestum* lacks any indication of steps, which makes it necessarily a pedestal; (b) the woman is quite Greek in her dress, and stands upon the same level as the emperor's throne. Therefore, although this group has a connection with the other, it does not cease to be allegorical. If the first group is applauding some generous act of the emperor, this one must personify liberality or a kindred virtue. Now we know that under the Empire it became common to represent the emperor in the guise of some virtue or in connection with a personification thereof. This was especially true of designs on coins, of which several exist very like the group in question.³ It also bears a marked similarity to the design on a coin of Trajan which records the *ALIMenta ITALiæ*.⁴ As Hadrian increased this

¹ Jordan, *Topographie der Stadt Rom im Alterthum* (1878), II, p. 29.

² *Ann. Inst.* 1872, p. 309.

³ Cohen, II, p. 184, 949.

⁴ Cohen, II, p. 19, 15.

donation,¹ the significance of the group would be easily understood."

The scene on the eastern screen Brizio compares with certain coins of Hadrian, representing a lictor burning a mass of papers.² These bronzes commemorate an act of Hadrian in 118 A.D., when he caused the *syngrapha* representing the debts owed to the fiscus to be solemnly burned. This act is recorded by Hadrian's biographer¹ and also in an inscription,³ as well as on the coins mentioned.²

There is one difficulty in the way of this interpretation, which, however, does not seem to Brizio insurmountable. Spartianus, speaking of the burning of the accounts, says expressly that the act in question took place in the Forum of Trajan. Aurelian, however, burned accounts later in the same Forum. Our critic, therefore, thinks it likely that Spartianus confused the two events, and so spoke of Hadrian's action as occurring in the place made famous by the cremation under Aurelian.

He feels that all difficulties would be solved could we see the head or face of the emperor. From the fragment of head still remaining on the seated figure of the emperor, it seems likely that it was bearded. This would at once set the date as not earlier than Hadrian's time, since he was the first emperor to wear a beard. This inference is further confirmed by the fact that all of the lictors and some of the citizens have beards.

In considering these reliefs from an artistic point of view, Brizio finds them much better than the sculptures on the Arch of Claudius, or on that of Titus. While on the latter the figures are confused and show no attention to the laws of grouping, we have here a harmonious arrangement both of individuals and of the whole. It is also noticeable that they so far lack the quality of statuesqueness found in the figures on the Arch of Titus as to seem to have been executed under the influence of an entirely different and much more artistic principle. This is just what would be expected in Hadrian's time; for, as a

¹ Spart. *Had.* 7.

² Cohen, II, p. 208, 1210-1213.

³ *C.I.L.* 6, 967.

result largely of his influence, the art of sculpture underwent a strong revival along Greek lines during his reign. Both art and history are thus seen by him to agree in assigning these reliefs to the time of Hadrian.

A large majority of the scholars who have studied these *plutei* agree in referring them to Trajan, for reasons which may briefly be stated as follows:

One of the most popular acts of Trajan's reign, and one which was commemorated on an arch as well as by coins and inscriptions, was the enlargement (amounting practically to the founding) of the system of alimention begun on a small scale by Nerva. The large number of coins¹ which refer to this system of relief, as well as the fact that it was mentioned on a triumphal arch, show the great interest which it had for the people. Another almost equally popular measure was the remission in certain cases of the tax on inheritances (*vicesima hereditatium*).² (This would be represented by the burning of the accounts as shown on the eastern screen.) We have thus two acts of this emperor which might be represented by these reliefs. From the point of view of art it is argued, *e.g.* by Henzen,³ that in the abundance of detail, in the use of "three planes of relief,"⁴ in the tendency to particularize, and in the vivacity of the figures, we have elements found elsewhere on monuments which are indubitably of Trajan's time. To this must be added the further confirmation given by the similarity of arrangement of the dress, beard, and hair of the different figures to that on reliefs known to be of this period, which proves that the screens cannot be assigned to an earlier date. Any one who would attribute them to Hadrian, must assign them, as Brizio⁵ did, to the first years of his reign when the artists of Trajan's day were still living.

There are thus three theories as to the historical import of the reliefs, referring to the acts of three different emperors.

¹ Cohen, II, pp. 18, 19; 7-19.

² Plin. *Paneg.* 40 (ed. Keil).

³ *Bull. Inst.* 1872, p. 276.

⁴ Cf. statement on p. 64.

⁵ *Ann. Inst.* 1872, p. 309.

It is necessary, in the first place, to examine in detail some of the premises upon which these conclusions are based.

Almost every one who has written about these groups has discussed the question, Have the men beards? It has been said that they were bearded, and that they were not; and that if they were, the reliefs must date from Hadrian's time and not from Trajan's. A careful study of the faces, particularly of those on the western screen, on which the heads are less mutilated, shows that the full clean outline of the chin can be traced on many of the figures, and that it is hardly possible that these were bearded. Certain others it is equally clear were bearded; for example, the lictor who stands next to the last man on the rostra. The question, then, is whether the presence of some bearded men proves the date to be as late as that of Hadrian's reign.

In Cicero's time and after (possibly also before), many men wore beards, and only men over forty were clean shaven.¹ Spartianus² speaks of Hadrian as wearing a full beard (*promissa barba*) to cover scars upon his face. Dio Cassius³ also speaks of him as the "first" to wear a beard. He is not the first emperor whose bust shows him to have allowed the hair upon his face to grow, but he is the first one represented as wearing a full beard. Evidently, therefore, Hadrian did not introduce beards, but only the custom of wearing them long and full. On Trajan's Column there is a representation of the emperor sacrificing at an altar; many of the men who appear in the scene are bearded, but by no means all of them.⁴ Again we find a scene wherein the seated emperor is surrounded by attendants, some of whom are bearded.⁵ In still another group, Trajan is standing with a roll in his hand, addressing his men, and again we see both bearded and beardless men among those who stand before him.⁶ On the rectangu-

¹ Marquardt, *Privatleben der Römer*, p. 600; Cic. *Cat.* 2, 10.

² *Had.* 26.

³ 68, 15.

⁴ Cichorius, *Die Reliefs der Traianssäule*, Taf. xxxviii, xxxix.

⁵ *Ibid.* Taf. liv.

⁶ *Ibid.* Taf. liv.

lar reliefs of the Arch of Constantine we find that the men accompanying Trajan are bearded, even when he and they are clad in the toga. The arch at Beneventum shows in the same group lictors and *comites* both as bearded and beardless.

It would seem a fair deduction from these examples that in Trajan's time one might expect to find among any group of men a number who would be represented as wearing beards. That some of those on the reliefs in question have beards, is not, therefore, a proof that the work dates from Hadrian's time.

Of all the possible subjects which have been suggested, the two edicts of Domitian are the least probable. They are not, as far as at present appears, recorded on any monument, nor are there coins¹ which commemorate them. They passed apparently unapplauded and unnoticed by the general public; it is to literature, and especially to poetry, that we owe our knowledge of them.

Hadrian's claim to recognition lies in the fact that he burned the *syngrapha*; but this is expressly said to have taken place in the Forum of Trajan. While this act is represented on one of his coins² in a manner which would suggest the group upon the screen, it must be remembered that similar scenes would be represented in similar ways; and it is quite as possible that the design upon the coin was suggested by the monument, especially since we know of many famous statues which were thus copied, as to suppose that it was the original of the group, or contemporaneous therewith. Furthermore, the system of alimentation, as increased by him, had no special mention upon monuments of any kind, and is not mentioned upon coins;¹ nor does a study of works of art known to date from his time yield any evidence in favor of assigning the *plutei* to his reign.

On coins of Hadrian, two designs are found similar to the group on the western screen. One, on the reverse of a bronze which bears the legend,

LIBERTAS RESTITVTA. PONT. MAX. TR. POT. COS. III. S. C.

¹ This statement is based upon the coins listed in Cohen.

² Cohen, II, p. 184, 949.

represents Hadrian seated on a throne extending his hand to a woman, who holds on her left arm a child while with her right hand she presents an older one; she rests one foot upon a footstool, but another coin is known to exist which is the exact duplicate of this, only that she stands with both feet upon the ground, as does the figure on the screen. Another bronze of the same emperor shows a lictor applying a torch to a mass of papers, while the men standing before him applaud with uplifted hands.¹ On a bronze, bearing the legend, JVDAEA, S. C., the emperor is standing and extending his hand over two children who carry palms; while opposite, near an altar, is a woman.² On still another bronze the attitude of the seated emperor holding a sceptre in his left hand, and a branch in the other, is very similar to that of the figure on the tribunal.³

Two coins of Antoninus Pius, one with the legend,⁴ LIBERALITAS AVG. II, and the other with,⁵ PIETATI AVG. COS. IIII, show respectively the seated emperor, beside whom stands Liberalitas, pouring money from her horn into the hands of a man who stands before the emperor, and a woman holding a globe in her right hand and a child upon her left arm, while two other children stand beside her. Reference has already been made⁶ to the coins of the younger Faustina and Lucilla, which show Fecunditas typified in a similar way, while Parthia or Germania is represented on a coin of Augustus as presenting a child to the emperor,⁷ and Tiberius on one of his bronzes is seated in precisely the same attitude as the emperor upon the tribunal.⁸ It is clear then that while the designs on the coins of Hadrian bear a great resemblance to these reliefs, certain ones of other emperors likewise resemble them in many respects, and tend to prove that these types of a woman with a child, and the seated emperor, were not uncommon.

There are a number of different coins all bearing the legend,

¹ Cohen, II, p. 209, 1212.

² *Ibid.* II, p. 179, 871.

³ Cohen, II, p. 220, 1386.

⁴ *Ibid.* II, p. 317, 483.

⁵ Cohen, II, p. 331, 624.

⁶ p. 62.

⁷ Cohen, I, p. 87, 174.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 189, 3.

ALIM. ITAL.,¹ commemorating the system of alimentation carried out under Trajan. (It should be remembered that the system as begun by Nerva is not mentioned on any of his coins.²)

There is therefore reason for attributing these reliefs to Trajan, on the ground of the abundant recognition which the system of alimentation received. It is also established that the group upon the tribunal is not unusual in arrangement or symbolism, and is capable of reference to some such beneficent act of the emperor as the establishment of this system.

One point frequently urged against the claim that these scenes pertain to Trajan's reign, is the presence of the three animals of the *suovetaurilia*, which is said to prove that the reliefs date from Domitian's time and not later, because he was the last to offer this sacrifice as censor. But the *suovetaurilia*, while peculiar to the office of censor, does not, by its presence, necessarily indicate a lustration following a census. Tacitus records its being offered at the rebuilding of the Capitoline temple,³ and when the army crossed the Euphrates.⁴ The Arch of Constantine shows Trajan clad in a toga, sacrificing these animals, and on the great column in his forum he is represented as about to offer this sacrifice.⁵ A base, now in the Forum near the Arch of Septimius Severus, showing in relief the *sus*, *ovis*, and *taurus*, and, as the inscription proves, set up to commemorate some *decennalia*,⁶ is universally dated much later than the *plutei*, being assigned to the reign of Diocletian,⁷ or Constantius and Maximianus.⁶ The presence of these animals, therefore, does not prove that the screens must date from the reign of Domitian or earlier; they may belong to the time of Trajan, so far as historical probability is concerned.

We see, therefore, that when Trajan's acts are considered, a very different state of affairs is found from that which exists in

¹ Cohen, II, pp. 18, 19; 7-19.

² This statement is based upon the coins listed in Cohen.

³ *Hist.* 4, 53.

⁶ *C.I.L.* 6, 1203.

⁴ *Ann.* 6, 43.

⁷ *Röm. Mitth.* 1893, p. 281.

⁵ Cichorius, *Taf.* xxxviii.

the case of the other emperors. There is nothing in the line of documentary evidence against his having made the proclamation in regard to the system of alimentation in the Roman Forum. Public cremation of condemned articles had taken place here, so that it is most improbable that Trajan's Forum, even if completed at the time when the *plutei* were set up, would have been chosen as the place for this solemn destruction. The costumes accord with those depicted upon monuments of his time, and the *suovetaurilia* is a sacrifice which he is represented more than once as offering. The system of alimentation was commemorated by an arch and by coins and inscriptions, in a way that shows its immense popularity and makes it more than probable that some lasting memorial thereof would be erected. Finally, the workmanship of the monument and the fact that it is in relief, point at once to a reign wherein good art and a fondness for relief work were prevalent.

Topographical Interpretation of the Reliefs. — The historical or artistic features of the monument by no means monopolize the attention of the student. The Roman Forum has always been a favorite field of the topographer, and the prospect of a possible solution of some of the many disputed points in connection with the buildings in and around it aroused every one to an earnest study of the buildings which form the background for the two principal groups. The most important of the theories thus far advanced will therefore be presented and their probability considered.

Nichols,¹ in discussing the topography of the Forum as indicated by the reliefs, calls attention to the fact that on each screen we find the tree at the left of the statue, while the rostra changes sides. From this he infers that the scenes are continuous, as follows (beginning at the right hand on the eastern screen): the temple of Vespasian, that of Saturn, an arch of the loggia of the Tabularium, and the Basilica Julia, which is continued on the western screen, on which we have the Basilica Julia, a space indicating the Castor temple (which

¹ Nichols, *The Roman Forum*, p. 67.

is not shown because hidden from the spectator by other monuments), the temple of Julius Caesar, and the Arch of Augustus. The position of the Rostra after its removal from its old site¹ he thinks has never been ascertained, "except in so far as the sculptures before us enable us to do so."

According to Middleton² the following buildings and arches are represented: on the western screen (beginning at the left), the Arch of Augustus, the temple of Castor and Pollux, and the Basilica Julia; on the eastern screen, the Saturn temple, an arch of the Tabularium, and the Vespasian temple.

Visconti,³ deeming the reliefs of themselves "sufficiently clear," gives the following explanation of the buildings represented. On the western screen the emperor is evidently speaking from the rostra of the Capitol. The arch directly behind him must be one of those leading to the Forum, and it is possible to take it as one which passed over the present Via Marforio. Beyond the vacant space which intervenes is the Curia Hostilia (or Julia). The vacant space to the right of this is that of some open way corresponding to the present Via Bonella; beyond it is the easily recognizable Basilica Aemilia. The *suggestum* which is before it must be that of the praetor, situated toward the short side of the Forum near the Arch of Fabius. The vacant space following is evidently that of the area of the Comitium because of the presence of the Ficus Ruminalis, which is a certain indication thereof; moreover, the statue of Marsyas is also here near the Rostra Julia and the tribunal of the praetor.⁴ This position of the Comitium, which we know was once before the Curia, he explains upon the supposition that it was transferred under the Empire to the lower end of the Forum.

On the eastern screen the rostra is turned in the same way (*i.e.* toward the lower end of the Forum); so we have still the

¹ Dio Cassius, XLIII, 49.

² Middleton, *Remains of Ancient Rome*, I, p. 346.

³ Visconti, *Deux actes de Domitien*.

⁴ Senec. *de Benef.* 6, 32; Schol. Hor. *Sat.* 1, 6, 120.

rostra of the Capitoline. The temples of Vespasian and Saturn must be the ones next given, while the arch between them serves to indicate in the most positive way a road; possibly it is the Porta Pandana, which is known to have spanned a road leading to the Capitol. Next to the Saturn temple stands the Basilica Julia, beyond which is the open space indicating the Vicus Tuscus, and the fig tree and Marsyas complete the circuit. But this time the statue precedes the tree because "it is natural that the person who looks at them the long way of the Forum would see them in a reverse position from the one who looks at them from the side which is opposite to them."

"The spectator, who, standing in the middle of the Forum, facing the Rostra, should direct his eyes from left to right would, after surveying the upper end and side of the same, find at the lower end the fig tree and the Marsyas statue; if now he begins with them, and takes another survey from left to right, he will see the other long side of the Forum and return inevitably to the Rostra, with which he began." This is the explanation which Brizio¹ gives of the topography, and he would name the buildings as follows: The arch behind the rostra (on Fig. 2) is either a triumphal one or a Janus, for these two forms are much alike in reliefs. (The latter is perhaps the more probable explanation.) Next to it is the Senaculum of Domitian, then the Basilica Aemilia. On Fig. 3 (beginning at the left) the Basilica Julia and the Saturn and Concord temples are easily recognized. The appearance of the Basilica Julia here is very different from that on the Arch of Constantine, which may be due to repairs made upon it at a later period.

In Marucchi's *Foro Romano*, pp. 104-108, the eastern screen is said to show the temples of Vespasian and Saturn, and the Basilica Julia. As the Marsyas and fig tree appear on each side, only in reversed positions, they must be used as hyphens and indicate that the scenes are continuous; and this interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the basilica arches on the

¹ *Ann. Inst.* 1872, p. 317.

two screens are "identical in form and dimension." We have therefore on the western screen the Basilica Julia, the Vicus Tuscus (indicated by the vacant space), the Castor temple, the Arch of Augustus, and the rostra of the Aedes Divi Juli.

Jordan's explanation¹ may be briefly stated thus: On the eastern screen, beginning at the right, the Vespasian temple, an arch (either that of Tiberius or an arch of the Tabularium), the Saturn temple, the Basilica Julia; on the western screen an unknown arch, the Curia, a street (shown by the blank), and the Basilica Aemilia.

Gardthausen² has supported the view that we must orient the *plutei* from north to south, and trace the buildings accordingly. This theory seems largely based on two premises: first, that the screens are *in situ*; secondly, that the Basilica Aemilia, being the most beautiful building in Rome, could not have been represented merely by a few pilasters and columns. It may be answered that the travertine foundations are utterly unworthy of the *plutei*, and even if veneered with marble are a most unlikely base. As for the second reason adduced, it is hard to see how doubling the number of pilasters and columns makes a more adequate representation of the most beautiful basilica, nor why this same argument would not compel one to consider the representations of the temples as equally inadequate. This view therefore has not been considered in the final summary.

In comparing the various theories which have been thus briefly stated, it will be seen that our ideas as to what buildings are represented will depend, on the one hand, upon the view we adopt as to the meaning and use of the Marsyas and the fig tree; and, on the other, upon what we consider to have been the artist's conception of his background. A study of temples, arches, and other buildings, as represented upon coins and reliefs, leads to the conclusion that, while one can never look for absolute accuracy in such representations, nor even for correctness of detail (such as the number of columns of a

¹ Jordan, I, 2, p. 224.

² *Hermes*, 1874, p. 129.

temple), one may not assume, without good proof, that the artist has taken unusual topographical liberties with anything but his perspective. The Arch of Augustus, as shown on coins, is a good example of the freedom thus exercised. Recent excavations have proved that this was a triple arch like that of Septimius Severus. On coins it appears as a single, double, or triple arch, but always surmounted by a quadriga.¹

On the Haterian reliefs² (which date from the third century of this era) we find a series of buildings indicated as being upon the Sacra Via, one of which is entirely unknown to us, while the remainder are treated in a conventional and, at the same time, a free manner. For example, the temple of Venus and Rome is represented simply by the goddess, who is sitting under the Arch of Titus, her own temple not being shown. Only two stories are given to the Colosseum, while the temple on the right hand, has, as often on coins, its statue not within the *cella*, but in full view. The artist evidently felt himself justified in conventionalizing his representations, but not in adding edifices which were out of sight or in omitting a prominent building. Remembering, then, that one is not justified in hasty assumptions as to the artist's having made arbitrary changes, nor yet in requiring photographic accuracy, we may now proceed to consider the topography of the reliefs.

As two objects appear on both *plutei*, — namely, the fig tree and the Marsyas, — they have naturally constituted the point around which the topographical questions centre. It is therefore necessary to learn all we can about them at the outset.

On the familiar passage in Horace,³

"Obeundus Marsya, qui se
vultum ferre negat Noviorum posse minoris,"

the Commentator Cruquianus remarks: "Marsyas statua erat pro rostris ad quam solebant convenire causicidici;" Acro says:

¹ Cohen, I, p. 82, 123, 229, 230, 231, 235, 544.

² Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentl. Samml. klass. Alterth. in Rom*, I, pp. 515-520.

³ *Sat.* I, 6, 120.

"Marsyas statua erat pro rostris." Martial¹ gives a still more vague indication of its position in the lines,

"Fora litibus omnia fervent;
Ipse potest fieri Marsya causicus."

Seneca,² speaking of Julia, daughter of Augustus, implies that the statue stood near the Rostra: "Forum ipsum ac rostra ex quibus pater legem de adulteriis tulerat, filiae in stupra placuisse, quotidianum ad Marsyam concursus." In the elder Pliny reference is made to it in two connections: "P. Munatius cum demptam Marsyae coronam capiti suo imposuisset atque ob id eum duci in vinculi triumviri iussissent, appellavit tribunos plebis. . . . Apud nos exemplum licentiae huius non est aliud quam filia divi Augusti, cuius luxuria noctibus coronatum Marsyam litterae illius dei gemunt."³

It would seem, then, from the testimony of these ancient writers that such a statue stood in the Forum, and presumably near the Rostra. The meaning of this Marsyas or Silenus, when standing, as was usual in Italian cities, in the marketplace, is uncertain. Servius, commenting on the word *Lyaeo*, says:⁴ "Lyaeo, qui, ut supra diximus, apte in urbibus libertatis (ubertatis?) est deus. Unde etiam Marsyas eius minister in civitatibus in foro positus libertatis (ubertatis?), qui erecta manu testatur nihil urbi deesse." It was probably originally connected with the idea of fulness or wealth (*ubertas*) before it came to be considered a sign of the city's freedom. This latter use seems to have developed in the seventh⁵ century of the city. One of the earliest representations of the Marsyas known to us is on the reverse of a denarius of the gens Marcia (B.C. 84),⁶ and agrees with the description given by ancient authorities. The figure has a tail, and is nude except for his boots; his right hand is uplifted, while the left grasps

¹ 2, 64, 8.

² *N.H.* 21, 8-9.

³ *De Benef.* 6, 32.

⁴ *Aen.* 4, 58.

⁵ Baumeister, *Denkmäler*, art. "Marsyas"; Jordan, *Marsyas auf dem Forum*.

⁶ Babelon, *Monnaies de la République romaine*, II, p. 195, 42.

a wine skin. Certain coins of cities in Asia Minor show a similar design, as used much later (ninth century of the city).¹

In this use in the Forum the figure seems to have no connection with the story of the contest between Apollo and Marsyas, but to be a Silenus who carries a wine skin, not a victim being flayed.

This leads to a consideration of the tree which in both scenes stands next to the Marsyas.

The Ficus Ruminalis, under which Romulus and Remus had been found, had been, according to Roman tradition, transferred from its original site to a place "in foro ipso ac comitio"² by the augur Attius Navius. Tacitus mentions it as "Ruminalem arborem in comitio."³ From the reverence with which it was regarded, and on account of its position, it became one of the natural landmarks of the Forum, so that its presence in any scene would indicate clearly that the place of action was the Forum.

We have thus, as the most prominent features of these scenes, two of the oldest and most sacred landmarks of the Forum and Comitium, namely, the Marsyas and the Ficus Ruminalis. Each is depicted with a cubical base, thus indicating its symbolical meaning. The suggestion of Hülsen⁴ that, as on the western screen the cubical figure upon which the tree appears to stand has incised lines on both of the sides which are shown, we must therefore consider it not a base but a square enclosure, does not seem warranted by the facts; for we find these same lines shown on both bases of the eastern screen, and on one side of the Marsyas base on the western screen. Its absence on the other side appears to be a concession to the obvious difficulty of cutting lines upon that particular part. The two bases may, therefore, be taken as part of the conventionality of the group, simply indicating its allegorical use.

Hence, it may be safely assumed that the artist, wishing to delineate a scene in the Forum, took, as a means of indicating

¹ Cohen, IV, p. 283, 278.

² Pliny, *N.H.* 15, 77.

³ *Ann.* 13, 58.

⁴ *Röm. Mitth.* 1892, p. 287.

this place, three of the most prominent objects therein,—the Rostra, the fig tree, and the Marsyas; and, desiring an arrangement of each scene which should be harmonious and yet not an exact repetition of the other, he placed the group at one end and the Rostra at the other, varying the position of the two objects which compose the group so as to avoid a sameness, as needless as it would have been inartistic. On the eastern screen we see a further proof of this motive for change in the composition of the group, in the way in which the tunic of the last man blows back against the statue, while on the opposite side we have the quiet harmony of the long lines of the drapery of the standing figure and of the tree by which he stands. The decorative effect which is to be produced by the fig tree is further shown by the way in which it is used in each case to cover by its leaves and fruit as large as possible a portion of the otherwise blank space, which would have formed an unpleasant contrast to the rest of the background, which is fully occupied by buildings.

Since the Marsyas and the fig tree have only a symbolical and decorative but not strictly topographical purpose, it is possible to discuss more intelligently the question as to what buildings in the Forum are represented. The buildings which suggest themselves as easiest of identification are those represented on each screen by a series of arches and pilasters or columns. Various scholars¹ have argued that these must be representations of the same building, especially as the Marsyas and the fig tree appear at the end of each. But, as we have concluded, the latter are not used with any strictly topographical meaning. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the artist would have drawn two scenes which are so inharmonious when placed together, as taking place before the same building. It is also to be noted that the two differ much in drawing. Only one fragment remains which shows the top of the arches of the basilica on the eastern screen, but it is sufficient to give the

¹ *E.g.* Middleton, *Remains of Ancient Rome*, I, pp. 346–347; Marucchi, *Foro Romano*, pp. 105–107.

diameter and height of the arch, which differ respectively by 3 cm. and 3.5 cm. from those of the western screen.

Having, then, two basilicas, we find it easy to identify them as the Basilica Julia and the Basilica Aemilia. That only one story of each is given, while we have reason to believe that they exceeded that height, is due to the license employed by all artists when adapting buildings to designs for coins or architectural spaces. As has already been stated,¹ on the Haterian reliefs the Colosseum is reduced in height as well as distorted in its proportions. On the western screen the ship's beak adorning the front of the platform from which the emperor is addressing the people indicates at once that we have here the rostra of the Forum Romanum. This we know to have been changed in Caesar's time to a place at the foot of the Capitol, now happily identified. Although at times the steps of the Castor temple and the platform before the Aedes Divi Iuli² were used as rostra, this one, even though transferred from its ancient position, retained its place in the hearts and language of the people as "the Rostra." Its appearance upon the Arch of Constantine is evidence of its long-continued importance. In this position at the foot of the Capitol, it was probably entered from the rear³ by a sloping ascent, the terrace rendering stairs unnecessary.

If the emperor is standing upon the Rostra, the buildings represented as upon his left hand must be the Curia and the Basilica Aemilia. This agrees with all that is known as to the relative positions of the two buildings, and the space between them would naturally indicate the street separating the two.

It has been suggested that we have here the Castor temple, as the first building. But if we accept the platform with the ship's beak as the Rostra, this would be topographically impossible; moreover, it is represented as having steps in the front, which we now know was not the case with this temple.⁴ For similar reasons, it cannot be accepted as the Senaculum, for the

¹ p. 75.

² Jordan, I, 2, p. 227.

³ Richter, *Jb. Arch. Inst.* 1889, p. 15.

⁴ Jordan, I, 2, p. 375.

latest studies connected with the Forum and Comitium have proven that the Curia was next to the Basilica Aemilia.¹

This shows that the arch which closes the scene on the left is probably one over the Clivus Argentarius, the present Via Marforio. Whether it was a Janus or some triumphal arch cannot be definitely proven by any obtainable data. It is evident from such reliefs as that of the Haterii that arches existed and were well known, which no extant author has mentioned.

Having decided that the long building on the eastern screen is the Basilica Julia, it remains to identify the two temples with the arch between them. But before beginning, it must be noticed that this *pluteus* is incomplete and has lost a portion 0.98 m. in length. Comparing the measurements of the rostra on the western screen, we find that the missing portion was amply large to have shown a similar one. This fact, together with the part still visible, suggests a solution of the problem.

The temple with the Ionic columns next to the Basilica Julia is the Saturn temple, and the one with the Corinthian capitals is the temple of Vespasian. The missing fragment would not be more than long enough for depicting the Concord temple, which was so much broader than either of the other two. The screens then give us the two long sides of the Forum, beginning each time with the Rostra. To consider the last temple now visible on the *pluteus* as the Concord temple would leave no building which could have filled the missing portion of the scene behind the Rostra, and require us to imagine that so prominent and beautiful a building as that of the Vespasian temple was purposely omitted, an illogical and unnecessary conclusion.

The arch between the two temples remains to be identified. It has been called an arch of the Tabularium, the Porta Pandana, and an arch of Tiberius. The latter was erected "propter aedem Saturni";² Jordan³ places it, therefore, at the west end

¹ *Röm. Mitth.* 1893, p. 278; Lanciani, *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, p. 264.

² Tac. *Ann.* 2, 41.

³ Jordan, I, 2, p. 211.

of the Basilica Julia, over the Sacra Via, where in 1849 traces of some such construction were found.¹ From the location given by Tacitus it seems clear that the arch must have been either at this point, or else between the Basilica Julia and the Saturn temple, over the Vicus Jugarius. In either position it could not have been represented as between the Saturn and Vespasian temples.

The Porta Pandana or Saturnia Porta,² if it was "post aedem Saturni," as Solinus says,³ would hardly be represented in this position. And if it was, as some authorities think, a gateway on or near the Tarpeian rock,⁴ it would have been quite out of sight.

There remain, therefore, two possibilities: either an arch of the Tabularium is represented or an unknown one. Its simple form agrees with all that we know of the architecture of the Tabularium, while the way in which it is drawn seems to indicate clearly that it was back of the Vespasian temple. As none of the arches suggested can be proven to have stood here, it is most probable that the Tabularium is the building indicated.

The background is thus all accounted for, and the arrangement agrees in general with that of the buildings in regard to which we have any definite knowledge. There are many difficulties in the way of a hard and fast decision in regard to that which may always remain a disputed point; but in the present state of our knowledge this seems the most probable solution of the topographical problem.

Original Site and Use of the Screens. — The questions of the original position and of the use of the *plutei* are so closely allied as to be practically one. It may frankly be confessed that the two seem incapable of any satisfactory solution. There is no building or entrance in existence to which they can be certainly

¹ As this paper goes to press, advice is received from Rome indicating that this position of the arch of Tiberius has been definitely proved by the excavations of 1900-01.

² Varro, *L. L.* 5, 42.

³ Solinus, I, 13.

⁴ Kiepert and Hülsen, *Forma Urbis Romae*; Gilbert, *Topog. d. Stadt Rom*, I, p. 258; Jordan, I, 2, p. 122.

assigned, while the positions proposed can always be disputed. As for their position with regard to each other it can only be affirmed that they belong together. The combination proposed by any one will seem unlikely to another, and both equally improbable to a third.

It is possible, however, in all these matters to content one's self with something short of complete knowledge, realizing that to know what style of monument a people erected is of far more value than to know the precise spot where it stood and the purpose it served.

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